Remarks on Mr. Cha. Leslie's *first Dialogue on the* Socinian Controversy.

SIR,

I Who am a true Scriptural Trinitarian, am far from rejecting as a Contradiction, any Doctrine that bears the genuine Stamp of Divine Revelation, merely because it has some Difficultys attending it which I cannot solve, or because I cannot frame an adequate Notion of it; nay, I firmly believe there is no Contradiction in the Scripture Account of the Holy Trinity, to the Divine *Unity*: But yet I must freely tell you, that I am no way assisted to answer the common Objections of that kind from what you offer towards clearing the vulgar Notions of a Trinity, from some Mens imputation of Contradiction and Inconsistency.

There may be Contradiction enough in the common Explications of that Doctrine, for ought you have said in the Matter. Nor have I ever met with less rational Satisfaction in the Point, than in your late uncharitable Dialogue. If such poor Philosophy, such shallow Reasoning, and such gross Divinity, must baffle the *Socinians*, I confess they ought to be the last who pretend to the Character of *Men of Reason*.

To *their* Charge of a Contradiction upon the Explication of the Trinity, you offer these things in your Defence.

1. Say you, That *may not be a Contradiction in one Nature, which is so in another*, p. 7. But here you greatly err; for a Contradiction always consists of two inconsistent Parts or Terms; and wherever those two Terms are united in any Proposition, 'tis always a Contradiction, let it be apply'd to what Nature you will. Indeed there may be something attributed to one Nature, where there is nothing inconsistent or contradictory to it; while if attributed to another it might meet with something inconsistent, whence a Contradiction will arise in the one and not the other: but as one of the Terms alone is not the Contradiction in any Case, so where both the Parts are join'd (which is the Contradiction) 'tis always a Contradiction, and of the same size, in any Nature. I should indeed suppose you might mean thus, were it not for those ridiculous Instances you bring for the Illustration of your meaning, *p.* 8, 9. where you intimate, that tho 'tis a Contradiction, for *our Legs to move two Yards as soon as one*, yet 'tis none for *the Eyes to reach a Star as soon as the Top of a Chimney*; or *for the Thoughts* to go to *Rome* as soon as the next Street: and gravely conclude, *Thus you see that what is a Contradiction to Legs, is none to Eyes nor to Thought*; and oft speak of the *Motion of Sight and Thought*: adding, that all the Philosophy in the World *cannot reconcile its going two Yards as soon as one, from down-right Contradiction* (for so you express it). But are you indeed so very weak as to think you move all the way to *Rome*, and are got thither as soon as you think of it? No, Sir, whatever hast you may be in thither, you go no faster than your Legs can carry you. And should you challenge all the Philosophy in the World? who have so little as not to know, that when you think of *Rome*, or any other Place, 'tis only the *Idea* of it in your Imagination which you contemplate, and not a Leap or local Motion of your Thoughts to it. In like manner, when we see the Stars, our Eyes move not up to them, but their extended Rays strike upon the Eye. I see you have a Head much fitter for entertaining and coining Mysterys, than for explaining or

defending 'em. It's a wonder you did not think rather, that *Rome* and *Conſtantinople* ſhift and come into your Head: and then ſince in other Caſes a leſſer Veſſel cannot contain a greater, nor a Nutſhel hold an Houſe; you might wonder how your little Head ſhould hold ſuch great Citys; and with the ſame Philoſophy infer, that what is a Contradiction to *Nutſhels* is none to *Heads*, and challenge all Philoſophy to reconcile it.

2. You ſay, *No Contradiction can be charg'd in any Nature we don't underſtand*, p. 7. For which Reaſon, you ſay, *we muſt not object Contradictions in the Incomprehenſible Nature of God, from comparing it with our own.* I ſhould grant this, in an Object of which we have no Knowledg at all: but ſurely if I have ſome, tho a partial Knowledg of the Infinite God, I may diſcern what is contradictory to that little Knowledg of him. Nor is any thing more uſual or juſt, than to deny ſuch or ſuch a Doctrine, becauſe incompatible to the Divine Attributes, to his Spirituality, Eternity, Goodneſs, *&c.* though perhaps ſome of theſe are not plainer nor better known than the Divine Unity. So that one may as well perceive ſome things to be contradictory to the Divine *Unity*, as we do others to be ſo to his Purity, and Spirituality, *&c.* for why ſhou'd his *Unity* be thought the only obſcure Attribute among Chriſtians? And therefore there is no more Caution due here than in all other Reaſonings from other Divine Perfections known but in part.

Nay, you your ſelf frankly grant, that we may perceive ſome things to be a Contradiction when affirm'd of God: for you ſay, *p.* 6. that 'tis *a Contradiction to ſay, three Perſons are but one Perſon*; and you are not ignorant (or if you be, you are not moſt fit to write in this Controverſy) that the Unitarians take this to be the very caſe, *viz.* that you make *three Perſons of one Perſon*, whatever you ſay; for they imagine, that God Almighty, in the compleat notion of God, is but one Perſon, expreſſed by ſingle perſonal Notes, *I*, *Thou*, or *He*. They fancy you pray to him as one Perſon, when you addreſs thus, O *Thou* Lord, *&c.* They don't obſerve any to cry, *O ye hear us*, &c. But if that be your meaning, pray conſider if you do well, by uſing the ſingle Pronoun, to give 'em occaſion to ſuſpect, that you take God for one ſingle Perſon, when you may ſo eaſily amend it, by ſaying always, O *Ye* in the Plural. *They* are ready to ſay, that when you prove the *Son* or *Spirit* to be a Perſon, you do it from ſuch Perſonal Notes as ſhew each of 'em to be one *He*: and that if under one *He*, *Me*, *Thou*, &c. (by which God Almighty is perpetually expreſs'd in Scripture) three *He's* are included (for inſtance, if the Words, *no Gods before me*, mean *none before us three*) then how ſhall they be ſure, that under the Perſon of Son, or Spirit, tho ſpoken of as one *He* each, there may not be many Perſons intended by you? Now you'l do well to ſhew, that God is not one *He* or Perſon, or that there are not three Perſons in him in a proper Senſe, ſuch as the Proofs ſome bring for the three Perſons do mean, if they prove any thing. Without this, you did not well in making ſo liberal a Conceſſion, *viz.* that 'tis a Contradiction for three Perſons to be but one Perſon, if you hold both.

3. You advance this odd Paradox, That if the Doctrine of the Trinity *be a Contradiction, it could not be an Invention*; annexing this ſhrewd reaſon for it, *For who could invent a Contradiction?* p. 24. as if no Error (which ever implies a Contradiction to ſome Truth) can be an Invention: whereas all Errors are nothing elſe but Inventions; and a *Socinian* will ſay, as you repreſent him, that you run into theſe Contradictions, by miſtaking

taking the holy Text. Whether you do miſtake it or not, or whether you get by the miſtake or not, I meddle not; but 'tis a fair account, how 'tis poſſible and eaſy for Contradictions to be invented: and your ſaying you don't miſtake the Text, be it ever ſo truly ſaid, is not to the purpoſe, ſince they, believing you do miſtake, can ſatisfy themſelves how it might ariſe, and are no way tempted to think it better than an Invention, merely for its ſeeming to them a Contradiction.

But tho you have ſaid ſo little to the purpoſe againſt the Objection of a Contradiction in the point; yet, as I ſaid, I argue not upon that head, and therefore leave it,

To conſider what Notion you'l give of the Trinity: for indeed till Men know *what Trinity* in God you mean, 'tis in vain to prove any more than a Trinity *in general*, which is not deny'd. You offer us ſome Parallels and *Images* to help our Conceptions, but very inconſiſtent ones. One while 'tis a Trinity like *three Faculties* of one Mind, and another while 'tis like a Trinity of three Men or *Minds*; which two are juſt as oppoſite as three Perſons, and one Perſon, which you ſay is a Contradiction: ſo that both cannot be true Images of the ſame thing.

1. You reſemble it often by three Faculties (that is, three Operations) of the one Soul, *p.* 14. where you ſay, *the Underſtanding is the Father Faculty*; the Memory is *begotten by it*, and the Will *proceeds* from both. This, you ſay, is an *Image of the ſeveral Perſons of the Deity*, p. 30. Now tho you are out in your Account of the Nature and Pedigree of the Faculty, when you make the *Memory* another Faculty, which is but an Act of the Underſtanding, and ſo is no Image of a ſecond Perſon; and when, ſuppoſing it another eſſential Faculty, you ſay, 'tis begotten by the *Underſtanding Faculty*, whereas 'tis only the Exerciſe of the Memory that the Underſtanding can occaſion, and not the *Principle*, which is before any Act of the Underſtanding: yet when you have pleas'd your fancy ever ſo much, with theſe pretty Jingles; this is nothing to the *Socinians*, it only ſhews, how three Operations of a Mind may be in but one Perſon, not how three Perſons may be in one Mind; unleſs the divine Perſons are but ſo many Operations or Thoughts. Beſides, they will ask ſuch *Allegorical* Trinitarians (for I aſſure you in this Caſe, you are not charg'd with keeping *too much to the Letter of the Text*, as you pretend, *p.* 25. *but too little*, in making three ſuch diſtinct Agents, as Father, Son, and Spirit, to dwindle into a thin Figure or *Propoſopæia*) whether *Arius*, or *Socinus*, or any *Unitarians* ever deny'd ſuch a Trinity: Were they ſuch Fools as not to believe, God knows and loves himſelf? (And can't he do this without being 3 Perſons, which is done by every ſingle finite Perſon?) If this be eternal *Generation* and *Proceſſion*, they are for it; and they have been barbarouſly us'd if this was all the Charge againſt 'em, which all know they were clear of, and that they believ'd God has ſomewhat anſwering to our three Facultys.

You pretend, *p.* 17. that notwithſtanding the Unlikelineſs of three Faculties to three Perſons, you muſt yet uſe the term *Perſons*, *becauſe we muſt not alter the Phraſe of Scripture*; and yet the Scripture has no ſuch Phraſe at all as three Perſons in one God. Your alledging the Words, *the Image of his Father's Perſon*, is here impertinent for proof of three Perſons in God; it only proves God the Father to be a Perſon, which none deny. Tho the word ὑπόστασις ſignify'd, then, *Subſtance* not *Perſon*, Heb. 11. 1. you of all ought to give a better reaſon than this for uſing the Terms, *three Perſons*, of God; becauſe (if I miſtake not) at the end of Mr. *G*'s *Deiſts Manual* you have ſaid, that the word *Perſons*, ap-

ply'd to God, is us'd in a Senſe *infinitely different* from what it means when us'd of Men. Now if it be *infinitely different*, 'tis at the wideſt diſtance poſſible; and nothing can be more unfitly made uſe of than ſuch Terms as expreſs all the Unlikeneſs poſſible to the thing intended. 'Tis a ready way to deceive Men, to uſe terms that are the fartheſt off of any we can deviſe, from expreſſing the true meaning: 'tis better ſaying nothing of God, than what begets corrupt *Ideas* of him.

However, will this ſort of Trinity, like to three Operations of Man's Mind, accord with the Scripture Trinity of the Father, Son, and Spirit? who have ſuch diſtinct Parts and Agencies aſſign'd 'em, as cannot be ſo much as ſhadow'd out by our three Faculties. You grant the *Father* was not incarnate, but the *Son*. Can the Underſtanding be *incarnate*, and *ſent*, and *humbled*, &c. and not the *Will?* Are not the three Facultys always in the ſame human Mind, which is incarnate without Diviſion? Do you teach us, that the divine Nature is incarnate, without its Underſtanding, or *Father Faculty?* No, there muſt be more Diſtinction than this between the *not-incarnate* Father and the incarnate Son.

Beſides, don't you think the *Son of God* knows himſelf, and retains that Knowledg, and loves himſelf? And if ſo, then, according to you, he is the *Perſon knowing, and the Perſon known, loving and lov'd*, as you learnedly diſtinguiſh, *p.* 30. And this will make three ſuch Perſons in each Perſon, by reflecting on himſelf: for this ſeems to be your Argument, A Man knows himſelf, *ergo* he and himſelf are two Perſons. And at this rate a good Wit may allegorize all the Abſurdities of the *Alcoran* into fair Meanings, and ſilence all your Objections againſt it, tho the vulgar People be ſtill left to their own groſs Conceptions, while they take the literal and obvious meaning: nor do you build upon ſuch a Trinity, like that of three Facultys; for you have another Scheme which fits your Notions better. Therefore,

2. You reſemble the Trinity by three *human* Perſons in the ſame human Nature; but then leſt the *Socinians* infer, that three divine Perſons will in like manner be three Gods, as three human Perſons are three Men, you will not allow it to be *ſtrictly true, to ſay, Two or three Men*, when ſo many human Perſons are ſpoken of, *p.* 6. but think there may be many human Perſons in the *ſame one Nature*. And yet in ſhort, you tell the *Socinian*, that if he *would allow that ſeveral Perſons might partake of one divine Nature*, as *he does allow they do of one human Nature*, the *Diſpute was at an end, as to the Subſtance of it*. But Sir, the *Unitarians* do not allow one and the ſame Nature to have many Perſons in it; they judg every Man has a particular Nature and Subſtance of his own, in which none partakes, only that others have ſuch another like Nature to his: they cry, human Nature in general is a mere *Ens Rationis*, a Notion of the Mind ariſing from the comparing one Man's Nature with another.

However, if three divine Perſons be like three human Perſons as to their Unity of Nature; then I doubt they will, in conſequence hereto, be deem'd to be *three infinite divine Minds*, as three human Perſons have three finite Minds, let 'em be ever ſo much one in their *Nature*, or Kind. And if three divine Perſons ſhould as properly be accounted three Gods, as three human Perſons can (in ſtrict Speech) be accounted three Men, and are as truly three infinite Minds or Spirits, as three Men are three finite Minds, *there* is a ſad end of the diſpute indeed. But on the other hand, if three

Men

Men (or human Perſons) in the ſame *one ſingle Nature* or *Mind*, be a Contradiction, then you give the Unitarians too much occaſion to think the like of your Notions of the Trinity, by making this Parallel.

Moreover, If God teach us to number Men by *two*, *ten*, &c. and yet in oppoſition to ſuch Plurality, tells us, there is but one God, or rather that *God is but One*, *unus*, or εἷς, it warns us that his Unity is inconſiſtent with ſuch a plurality of Perſons as is in your human Nature. You add, *p.* 17. *If we ſay, there is not more than one Human Nature, we cannot ſay, there is more than one Divine Nature, tho ſeveral Perſons partake of it.* Now this ſhews your Notion of the Unity, which you ſacrifice to that of a Trinity: and upon this Notion of ſeveral *infinite Minds*, your Scheme is built; as your Arguments for the eternal Generation of the *Son*, and Proceſſion of the H. Ghoſt, do manifeſt: for you tell us, God muſt needs *generate* and produce other Perſons on theſe accounts.

1. Becauſe 'tis a *Perfection in Man* to propagate: *p.* 31. *We ſee Trees ſpring from Trees, Beaſts, Fiſh, Fowl, and Man propagate their Kind; and ſhall God be barren?* ſay you, and hook in a figurative Text, *Iſai.* 66. 9. according to the *vulgar Tranſlation*, to back you; and truly you wanted a better Authority for ſuch a Paradox. For you ought to know, that Man's Propagation is ſo far from being an abſolute Perfection, that 'tis founded in his Infirmity; he need not be multiply'd, but for want of others to ſucceed him when dead, or to aid and aſſiſt him while living. And as Angels, who are more perfect, do not propagate, I ſuppoſe; ſo neither will Men, when they come to a more perfect State: this will ceaſe with their preſent Imperfections. It ſeems then the nearer to God, the leſs there is of *this* Propagation.

But why muſt God be barren, for not propagating? Are not Angels and Men his Offſpring? and he the Father of the whole Creation? Would you have the Almighty propagate as thick as the Trees? I doubt you'l think him elſe, to be comparatively barren. The reaſon you give for not multiplying Perſons and *Productions*, or Communications in God [*viz. If it be infinite, it can be no more* than one; and *to infinite Productions nothing can be added; but human Productions may be repeated, becauſe finite*] ſhould be conſider'd as it ſeems to lie againſt any infinite Production in him at all. For it may be objected, that many infinite Productions are no more abſurd than many infinite Perſons; and that if infinite Perſon may be repeated, and can have an Addition, why not other Infinites?

2. Becauſe *God would be ſtinted in his Happineſs*, if *there were not a Perſon* (you muſt mean another Perſon) *to communicate all his Thoughts to*; and this muſt be an *infinite* Perſon, for ſay you, *nothing but infinite can contain infinite.* See more to this purpoſe, *p.* 32. And a little before, you argue for your point, from Man's want of ſome to converſe with; elſe his Life *is a Burden*, ſay you. *Who would be content to live, if there was never a Man in the World but himſelf?* Such a ſolitary indigent Being you ſuppoſe a great *Jehovah* to be, that without Company he cannot be happy. What a baſe ignoble Notion is this of that perfect Being? as if infinite Wiſdom and all Perfection cou'd want any thing more! and can't be happy, unleſs it be multiply'd into two Minds. Thus you make him *barren* indeed, while you talk of the divine *Fœcundity*; and tempt the *Unitarians* to think, that three ſuch Perſons as you would make 'em, are not ſo great as their One, *Self-ſufficient*, Eternal Mind.

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By these things you discover your Mind plainly, that you are for three *infinite Minds* or Spirits; and that by the divine *Generation* of a Son, you don't mean only his *Self-Reflection*, but a Production of another infinite Mind: for otherwise you talk inconsistently; nor is there any shaddow of resemblance between Man and God in the case which you argue upon. For you can't mean, that Man is solitary and miserable for want of conversing with his *own* Mind, but for want of another Man to discourse with: and accordingly must mean, that God could not be happy neither, without another infinite *Mind*. Nor does any deny him to contemplate himself, that you need argue for that against the *Socinians*; so that your meaning is plain. You do well to have two Schemes in readiness, one a Trinity of *Facultys*, which serves to explain the *Unity*; the other of three *Minds* (each with those three Facultys) which makes out a sufficient Trinity. This *latter* you and others make use of when you explain the *Incarnation*, because 'tis hard shewing the *Son's Nature* or *Mind* to be incarnate, and not the Father's, if it be the same particular individual Mind that is both *Father* and *Son*; the former is us'd in explaining the Trinity in General, and *in Thesi*. Now if these two happen to be inconsistent taken together, you cannot help that, because to be *three* Minds and yet but *one*, is hard to reconcile.

In my Mind you needed not to insist on the Authority of the Heathenish Philosophers about the divine *Fœcundity*, and a *Trinity* in God; since your Adversarys have been so willing to own you to be *Paganish* enough in your Notions. And as you own there is some Corruption in the *Pagan* Notions of these Matters, so they imagine there is *more* than you apprehend. Vid. *Platonism unveil'd*.

Let me only remark one thing more, *viz.* That when you illustrate the Union of the Divine Nature to the Human in *J. Ch.* by the Union of Man's Soul to his Body, *p.* 51. you don't account well for the Communication of the Propertys of the two Natures. You (tho contrary to the *Alexandrian* and best Copys) read that Text, *Acts* 20. 28. of *God's Blood*, and think what was done in the Man, may be said as truly of the united God; as *Man is said to eat*, &c. when it *belongs only to the Body*. Whereas in *this last* Speech the Propertys of the Body are not at all attributed to the Soul, as those of the humane are by you to the *divine* Nature. To say, *God shed his Blood*, or *was Flesh*, or *made Flesh*, is answerable to such Expressions, as *the Soul drinks*, the Soul is made Body, *&c.* And if we never speak so notwithstanding the personal Union in Man, then it may seem hard to justify such Expressions, as *God's Blood and dying*, &c. by any such personal Union of the two Natures, as never is a ground for such Communication of Propertys, in the Instance you parallel it by.

You say nothing for the *Procession* of the H. Spirit (as distinct from Generation, which is a great Article of Faith) from Scripture, only that he *proceeded from the Father*, *John* 15. 26. or *goes forth*. So all Gifts do, and Christ *proceeded* from the Father too, *Ch.* 8. 42. & 14. 28. and *he proceeded* (the very word us'd of the Spirit) *from Jericho*, *Mark* 10. 46. Is that all the ground you would shew for such a distinct Article?

To conclude, Unless you state your Notion more clearly, what Trinity you will maintain, 'tis in vain to cap Texts about you know not what. 'Tis easy to bend a Phrase divers ways. Unless you fix your Notion of a Trinity more distinctly, had you not better leave Men to believe only some Trinity in general, tho they can't well

well tell what? And tho you may think there is no ſuch vaſt difference between believing and not believing, one knows not what in particular, as that Men ſhould damn and hæreticate each other for it; yet certainly 'tis better to be content with this *little implicit* Faith, than to go about explaining what you cannot. For when all's done, a Man's *Faith* is not his Words but his Senſe and *Meaning*; and he who ſays a large *Creed* but *means nothing*, believes no more nor makes any more uſe of it, than he who denys it all, let him boaſt never ſo of his Faith.

And when you have brought a Text or two for Chriſt's being call'd *God*; and ſuppoſe it to be the Supreme God that is united to the Man Ch. J. yet if the *Unitarians* ſay, 'tis God the *Father*, as they gather from *John* 14. 10. who was *manifeſt in that Fleſh*, and ſo the *Father and he be one*, in as near Union as you imagine of a Second Perſon; and that therefore he is call'd, as you ſay, the *Everlaſting Father*, Iſai. 9. 6. which *they think* gave great virtue to his Performances; what are you the nearer?

You'l do great ſervice indeed, if you ſatisfy the *Unitarians* Scruples; not by corporeal reſemblances of the Trinity, from 3 (or 4) Dimenſions or Poſtures of a Body; or of the eternal *Generation*, by the *Light* (which you *call* an *Effect* of the Sun, but is indeed the very Sun it ſelf, ſo may well be as old) nor by vain Boaſts of the early *Fathers* (ſo often yielded up to the *Arians*) nor by concealing their ſtrongeſt Objections. Shew 'em that they have no ground to imagine Two or Three Gods (or *Infinite Minds*) to be imply'd in your Scheme of the Trinity, as they have fancy'd, not ſo much from the Expreſſions *God of God*, and *one equal* to God (and ſo far not the very ſame) in divine Perfections; as from the *Nature of your Scheme* it ſelf; as when you hold the divine Nature to be perſonally united to Man, but yet not the *Father*; as if, ſay *they*, he was not in that divine Nature that is incarnate, but another. *Alſo* that the Divine Nature and the Three Perſons are the ſame [elſe ſay your own ſide, there will be a Quaternity, *viz.* Three Perſons, and one Nature beſides: ſee *Le Blanc Theſ. de Dei ſimplicitate*, p. 100.] yet the three Perſons are not incarnate, tho the divine Nature (which is the ſame thing) be: That tho there be three Perſons in the divine Nature alone, yet when that Nature is join'd to another intelligent Nature, 'tis all but *one* Perſon. Indeed *two or three infinite Minds* would eaſily ſolve all this; but then the *Oxford Decree* 1695. has declar'd that impious and heretical. No doubt you'l do it another way: and having alſo made it appear, that there is no ſuch difficulty in ſuppoſing a begotten Being to be *ſelf-exiſtent* and independent; or elſe that he ſhould be Supreme God and the *firſt Cauſe*, tho he was not ſelf-exiſtent but dependent; and may have all the Perfections of God, tho he have not that of unbegotten Self-exiſtence: Then I ſay you'l go on ſmoothly with your Texts; but if you ſilently grant 'em, that *theſe* are really Contradictions, and really chargeable on your Opinions, you'l not wonder if they conclude, all thoſe human Comments on God's Word, which ſupport 'em, to be erroneous. That you therefore, Sir, may not loſe your Labor, nor they the Benefit of it; pray be ſo kind as to take this Advice, from one who truly wiſhes to ſee the Unitarians Errors detected, and that you may write to better purpoſe for the *Church*, than you are ſaid to have written for the *State*.

FINIS